

Wild and Scenic River

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCE

As discussed in the Two Eagle Recreation Specialist Report (for areas outside wild and scenic river), the majority of recreation activities within the Two Eagle project area are predominately dispersed in nature, with other uses occurring in developed sites, on trails and as part of special use permitted activities. Eagle Creek WSR is also typical of other wild and scenic rivers on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF) for the number of facilities, development scale of the recreation sites, and common recreation uses. Please see the Recreation Specialist Report for a summary of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Recreation Niche (WWNF, 2006).

FOREST PLAN DIRECTION

A summary of the Recreation Goal, Desired Future Conditions, and Standards and Guidelines that apply to Two Eagle are found in the Recreation Specialist Report.

Wild and Scenic Rivers are identified as Management Area 7 in the 1990 Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (WWNF, 1990). The management direction provided in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was intended to be interim direction until a river management plan was developed and the Forest Plan amended. In 1994 Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (River Plan) was approved, and amended as Forest Plan #15.

WILD & SCENIC RIVER PLAN DIRECTION

Since the construction of new recreation facilities or reconstruction of existing recreation facilities are not proposed within the Eagle Creek WSR, this report focuses on the vegetation management activities and their effect on the recreation setting, and visitor opportunities.

The Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River was designated under the national wild and scenic river system in 1988 with the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 100-557 and amended the Wild and Scenic River Act P.L 90-542). The Eagle Creek WSR is managed under direction from the 1994 Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (WWNF, 1993). The River Plan provides direction for all of the designated river corridor including the 1,166 acres within the Two Eagle project area. This WSR is to be managed for the identified outstanding remarkable values (ORV) which include: recreation, scenery, geology/paleontology, fisheries, and historic cultural resources.

Desired Future Conditions

A summary of the general Desired Future Conditions (DFC) from the River Plan are;

- The ORVs of fish, recreation, scenery, cultural (historic) resources, geology/ paleontology will be protected and enhanced.
- The entire river corridor will be free of impoundments. Enhancement of river corridor ecosystems, riparian vegetation, and water quality will receive high emphasis, balanced with improved management of recreation uses
- Vegetation Management within the corridor will emphasize maintaining a healthy and diverse river ecosystem.
- The corridor will have a predominance of late seral stands, abundant snags, and old growth groves.
- All vegetation management activities within the corridor will contribute to the protection and further enhancement of ORVs.
- Prescribed fire will often be used to meet river management objectives.

- Small selective cuts and timber sale units will be used in the regulated portion of the
 - corridor to provide a highly diverse mosaic of vegetative types and enhance OR values.
- 'Recreational' River segments - Although past and ongoing activities such as timber harvest and other developments may be evident near the river, the landscape will still appear to be predominantly natural appearing to the general forest visitor.

Recreation Desired Future Conditions

As detailed in the River Plan, Recreation is an ORV with specific Desired Future Conditions for this resource value. The applicable DFC conditions for Two Eagle include;

- The quality and diversity of recreation opportunities available and as well as excellent opportunities to interpret the area's unique natural history and the region's gold mining history qualified recreational values in the corridor as outstandingly remarkable.
- Those conditions that contributed to the OR value finding will be enhanced over time.
- Visitors will find forested, uncrowded settings with rustic facilities, and diversity of recreation opportunities that are dependent on or enhanced by the largely free-flowing nature of the river.
- Recreation use would be monitored and low to moderate increases would be allowed as long as consistent with protection and enhancement of river values and WRS and ROS use density guidelines are met.
- Recreational River Segments (Roaded Natural ROS)
- Opportunity to affiliate with other users in developed sites with some chance for privacy.
 - Self-reliance on outdoor skill is only of moderate importance. There is little challenge and risk.
- Area is characterized as a mostly natural appearing environment as viewed from the river or the main roads.
- Access and travel is by conventional motorized travel including sedans, trailers, RVs, and some motor homes.
- Interaction between users at developed camp sites is of moderate importance. Dispersed sites would be limited to current levels by controlling off-highway access.
- Obvious on-site controls of users.
- Access for people with disabilities is available to all developed sites and is of only a
 - moderate challenge.
- Interpretation would be of by wayside signs made out of rustic materials and some casual interpretation in campsites by forest staff.
- Trails would be maintained at current design and maintenance levels. Some new trails may be constructed to accommodate increased use.
- Off-road motorized opportunities would be readily available.
- Recreation facilities would be available and designed for user comfort and convenience.
 - Some synthetic but harmonious materials may be incorporated.
- Recreation facilities would be maintained at current levels but would be modified to provide increased access for those with disabilities, to separate recreational stock users from nonstock users, and to better protect and enhance ORVs.
- Some increase in developed site overnight capacity would be allowed to accommodate some increased visitor use but emphasis would be on maintaining the quality and variety of developed and dispersed recreational experiences rather than on adding facilities to accommodate moderate to large increases in recreational use.

Table 1. River Classification and ROS Classes

River Classification & Acres	ROS Class & Acres
Recreation (1,166 acres)	Roaded Natural (1,166 acres)
<i>Total WSR acres and % of Two Eagle</i>	<i>1,166 acres; 16%</i>

River Plan Standards and Guideline

Recreation Standards and Guidelines that apply to the proposed activities in Two Eagle include:

4. ORVs of the river must be protected and enhanced. Give protection and enhancement of OR values, water quality, and free-flow priority over uses described or implied in all other management direction and standards and guidelines. If potential conflicts arise between the OR values which cannot be resolved within the direction of the W&SR Act or this plan, then they shall be resolved according to the following priorities: 1) Fisheries, 2) Recreation, 3) Scenery, 4) Historic Cultural Resources, 5) Geology/Paleontology.

5. The highest designated classification must be maintained. Activities, development, and access in the river corridor cannot be allowed to increase to the degree that classification would be changed (i.e., classification cannot be changed from Wild to Scenic or Scenic to Recreational).

7. Because the corridor is a congressionally designated area, an environmental assessment will normally be the minimum NEPA documentation for any ground or vegetation disturbing activity

8. **Recreation.** The following standards and guides apply to all three river classifications. Also refer to Forest Plan direction for Recreation, Management Area 4 (Wilderness), Management Area 16 (Administrative and Recreation Site Retention), and FSM 2354. The most restrictive direction applies, unless there is an exception below.

9. Recreation use levels will be monitored. Low to moderate increases in recreation use will be allowed as long as consistent with protection and enhancement of OR values and WRS and ROS use density guidelines. Keep use increases at these lower levels by not adding major recreational developments and keeping road surfacing and road access at current levels. Management actions to limit use to protect river values may be required at some time in the future.

11. Current mix of recreational opportunities would be maintained. New uses will be allowed but only if they ensure protection and enhancement of OR values. No major recreation developments not listed in the Forest Plan are proposed.

14. Existing facilities would be maintained at minimum levels. An active program to close and rehabilitate incompatible sites where resource damage is occurring would be pursued.

19. Trail reconstruction and maintenance is permitted in all classifications. Trail upgrades will be allowed for resource protection, user safety, or to better accommodate existing uses.

Table 2. River Classifications and ROS Standards and Guideline #24

River Classification	Applicable Recreation Standards & Guides
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Manage areas for a Roaded Natural setting. However, activities shall be managed toward the less developed end of Roaded Natural.2) Road access will be provided to most areas along the Recreational section. Existing level of access will be

Recreation River	<p>maintained. No new access will be developed.</p> <p>3) Off highway vehicle use may be permitted on designated routes. New OHV areas will not be developed in the corridor.</p> <p>4) Recreation developments are permitted but will not exceed Development Scale 3. Native (or native-appearing) materials will be the norm.</p> <p>5) Interpretive brochures, turnouts, signs, and displays may be developed, consistent with protection and enhancement of OR values. Favor ORVs or other river-related themes in developing displays.</p>
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EXISTING CONDITION

Recreation Activities

A summary of the WWNFs typical recreation activities is found in the Recreation Specialist Report. These recreation activities are also typical within the WSR corridor.

Dispersed Recreation

As discussed in the Two Eagle Recreation Specialist Report, dispersed recreation activities in the project area includes uses such as viewing wildlife and natural features, hiking, fishing, dispersed camping, hunting and driving for pleasure. These are also common types of dispersed recreation observed with the WSR corridor.

Dispersed camping is a popular along Eagle Creek since it offers flat camping and parking areas off

Forest Service Road 7755, in shaded sites near the water. Along the Recreation section of the river there are numerous dispersed campsites. These campsites receive low to moderate use beginning in late spring with the majority of sites showing heaviest use during the fall hunting season. The sites are identified by their rustic user-built features such as rock fire rings, tables and meat poles (to hang big game). Like other dispersed camps on the forest, camp sizes vary and the average ones can accommodate 1-2 vehicles, yet larger ones can host 3-4 truck/trailer or RV units. Many of these campsites have been used for decades with some sites showing soil compaction and a loss of vegetation.

Eagle Creek and the adjacent riparian habitat also attract other types of dispersed recreation use unique from the upland project area. The river's ORVs within the project area offer a natural appearing environment where visitors can experience solitude, self-reliance, challenge and risk. Typical uses may include: viewing scenery, hiking, wildlife viewing, studying and viewing natural features like riparian plants or birds.

Currently OHV use can occur both on designated open roads, closed roads, trails and although terrain discourages cross-country use it is still not prohibited in some areas in the WSR corridor. Overall motor-vehicle use in the area is light yet it does increase during the big-game hunting season.

Developed Recreation Sites

There are four developed recreation sites in the wild and scenic river corridor – Boulder Park Campground, Main Eagle Trailhead, Two Color Guard Station, and Two Color Campground. District Recreation Managers report that overall use of the campgrounds varies from low to moderate use during the summer, and moderate to high in peak holiday weekends. The Main Eagle Trailhead has a small cul-de-sac area with parking for approximately 10 vehicles, a vault toilet, and an information board. The Two Color Guard Station is available by reservation from June through October and is typically occupied during 90+% of those nights.

Developed Trails

Although the Main Eagle Trailhead is within the Two Eagle project boundary, Trail #1922 is outside the project area and was not considered within the analysis.

Permitted Uses

An overview of the same types of permitted uses that occur within the WSR corridor is found in the Recreation Specialist Report – Permitted Uses section. Permitted activities such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting are not authorized in designated campgrounds, wild and scenic river corridors, old growth areas, active timber sales units, and other special designated location described on the permits. There are no long-term recreation special use permits such as outfitter and guides inside the project area.

Two Eagle lies within the Keating Big Game Management Unit. The area is popular during big game bow and rifle seasons in late summer and fall, and turkey hunting in the fall and spring. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will continue to offer hunting opportunities in this area as part of their management of big game and turkeys.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Methods

The same method of analysis cited in the Recreation Specialist Report was used for this report. In addition a detailed review was made of the Goals, Desired Future Condition, and Standards and Guidelines in the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (WWNF, 1993).

Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis

The same spatial and temporal context for the effect analysis cited in the Recreation Specialist Report will be used in this Wild and Scenic River Specialist Report.

Design Features and Mitigation Measures

Any design features, best management practices and/or mitigation measures are found in the individual Specialist Reports for Fisheries/Aquatics Species, Visual/Scenery, and Heritage/Paleontology. A Wild and Scenic River Act Section 7, 'Evaluation of Proposed Water Resource Projects' was completed for the activities proposed in the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Corridor. The evaluation concluded that a Section 7 Analysis would be needed for two types of projects;

- ☐ Timber harvest, prescribed fire and post-harvest activities within the WSR Corridor
- ☐ Effects on the Scenery ORV that may invade or have an unreasonable diminution to this value.

No Direct, Indirect, or Cumulative Effects

The following activities associated with the Two Eagle project are either not within the Wild and Scenic River corridor or area of such limited and constrained nature that they would have no effect on Wild and Scenic River outstandingly remarkable values.

- ☐ Closed roads reopened for administrative access
- ☐ Road decommissioning
- ☐ Road reconstruction
- ☐ Cottonwood Enhancement

These activities and their effects will not be discussed further in the effects to Wild and Scenic River section.

Direct and Indirect Effects

ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO ACTION

There would be no direct or indirect effects under Alternative 1. Vegetation densities or characteristics would not be modified, and the WSR corridor would continue to be influenced by natural processes and limited management actions, such as fire suppression. Since no implementation activities will result under this alternative, no change is anticipated in the number of visitors, frequency or season of use in dispersed recreation activities, developed recreation sites, trails, or permitted uses. Recreational visits within the project area would remain near the same levels as previous years and under this alternative traditional use patterns and recreational opportunities would not be impacted. Hunting, hiking and other dispersed recreation and permitted uses access and opportunities are expected to remain unchanged.

EFFECTS COMMON TO ALTERNATIVES 2, 2M, and 3

The specific project activities with the potential to impact recreation are common to all the proposals in Alternatives 2, 2M, and 3. Each of these Alternatives propose different levels of activities but the effects to the public involved in different recreation endeavors common to the area is relatively the same. Alternatives 2, 2M, and 3 include four main project activities that could affect recreation:

- **Timber harvest** (commercial harvest of timber, post harvest noncommercial thinning, and noncommercial thinning)
- **Post-harvest activity fuels treatments** (grapple pile, hand pile/burn)
- **Prescribed fire** (post harvest activity fuels treatment and ‘stand alone’ prescribed fire)
- **Road and Access activities** (danger tree removal along open system haul roads, temporary road construction, permanent road reconstruction, road decommissioning, bridge reconstruction and repair) A review was made of the project proposal for Alternatives 2, 2M, and 3 with the River Plan Desired Future Conditions (DFC) and Standards and Guidelines. The project activities are within these DFCs because:
 - The quality and diversity of recreation opportunities (ORV) will be maintained. The project will continue to find forested, uncrowded settings with rustic facilities since the developed recreation sites capacity and facilities will not be altered.
 - The project does not propose to restrict or eliminate the existing types of diverse of recreation opportunities. Short term restrictions for public safety around work activities (i.e. prescribed fire, Timber cutting) would occur.
- The project does not propose to restrict the largely free-flowing nature of the river.
- Recreational River Segments (Roaded Natural ROS)

- The project does not propose to change interactions or privacy in developed/dispersed recreation sites nor change the opportunity for self-reliance and limited levels of challenge and risk.
- The area will remain characterized as a mostly natural appearing environment as viewed from the river or the main roads. (See Scenery Specialist Report)
- The project activities are within these River Plan Standards and Guidelines because:
 - The identified River ORVS will be protected and enhanced.
 - Other ORVs – Please see the individual Specialist Reports for Fisheries/Aquatics Species, Visual/Scenery, and Heritage/Paleontology.
 - There are no planned changes to the river classifications to the recreation or scenic sections within the corridor.
 - The Two Eagle Vegetation Management Plan will fulfill the environmental assessment requirement for the proposed ground or vegetation disturbing activity

Dispersed Recreation

Dispersed recreation activities will be affected by all four types of project activities mentioned above. In the short term, timber harvest, post-harvest, and prescribed fire activities may restrict user access into a treatment unit due to safety purposes, or users may be discouraged from entering a unit due to the presence of equipment and workers. This may occur in peak summer visitations or during the fall hunting seasons. Downed trees, slash piles, loss of forest- products (i.e. mushrooms, berries), active fire and residual smoke will also discourage visitor use in an area. Noise and other disturbances may affect the quality of the recreation experience for an individual regardless of the proximity to the activity.

A change in natural features or landscape characteristics may elicit different responses in visitors. One attraction to an area may be linked to visitors 'sense of place' (Farnum, et al., 2005). A visitor's sense of place includes attachments to external factors like natural features or landscape characteristics. Important landscape features may consist of large old growth trees and groves, variety of trees species, an open or closed tree canopy, rock formations, water bodies, and natural appearing openings (USDA-FS, 1995). The proposed treatments such as harvesting large trees, reducing slash or altering canopy cover will change or remove some of these natural features. In some cases the changing landscape will displace or discourage certain types of dispersed recreational activities (i.e. studying nature, viewing wildlife). In other areas it may encourage new dispersed recreational activities (i.e. big game hunting, photography) not available under the previous landscape.

For Alternatives 2, 2M, and 3 there are dispersed camps within harvest units. Depending on when the timing and proximity of the treatment activities occur, campers at this site may be displayed or have a less quality experience due to noise, equipment activity, and dust.

Direct effects to recreationists accessing the dispersed camps in the project area or other areas will occur on roads during haul periods. The presence of large trucks or an increased frequency of traffic may discourage road use to these sites as well as associate activities outside the WSR corridor until the road work subsides. When roads are being constructed/reconstructed visitors may expect delays or closures during work periods. If roads are used for winter haul, they may be available for access by winter recreationist like cross-skiers which is uncharacteristic in most years due to closure by snow.

Long term effects of harvest and post-harvest treatments will evoke various reactions from recreationists. Recreationist seeking more open stands of forest may enjoy increased scenery views, wildlife viewing and some types of big-game hunting. Other visitors may view a loss of large trees and denser forest as a reduction in opportunities to view natural features and scenery, observe wildlife, and take self-discovery hikes. Another long term effect will provide safe and adequate roaded and trail access for the recreating public, through the cutting of danger trees and improving roadside visitor travel. This is also long term effect for developed recreation and permitted uses.

Developed Recreation

Units 33, 41, 45, 64, and 66 are in or immediately adjacent to developed recreation sites. Access to developed sites in the project area may be delayed or restricted during project activities. The presence of large log trucks and other equipment on haul routes may discourage users from driving the main access route to the developed sites or to associated off-site recreation activities. The noise, dust, smoke and equipment activity during harvest, post-harvest and prescribed fires may affect the quality of the recreation experience for a visitor regardless of the proximity to the activity. The frequency and intensity of these activities may vary from a few hours to several weeks. Some loss or change of vistas, scenery, natural features or wildlife viewing opportunities may result with the vegetation treatments and prescribed fire activities visible from the developed sites. No long term effects are expected.

Developed Trails

There would be no direct or indirect effects to the summer pack saddle/ hiking trails since no activities are proposed on them. Snowmobile trails have the potential to be impacted if a designated snowmobile route is plowed for winter haul. Coordination with the local snowmobile clubs may alleviate the concern if alternate temporary routes are groomed during the short term.

Permitted Uses

The same effects for gathering forest products (i.e. mushrooms and berries) that are summarized in the Recreation Specialist Report apply to this area within the Wild and Scenic River (WSR) corridor. Cutting of Christmas trees and firewood is not permitted in the WSR corridor.

Long term effects of harvest and post-harvest treatments will solicit various responses from permit users. Permit holders like mushroom pickers, will find short term benefits from open, disturbed mixed-conifer forest stands, whereas berry pickers may view the loss of berry patches as a negative impact.

Cumulative Effects

The same cumulative effects discussed in the Recreation Resource Specialist Report apply to the WSR corridor area.

Wild and Scenic River – Direct and Adverse Effects

Section 7 (a) of the Wild and Scenic River Act requires an evaluation of water resource projects in the WSR corridor to determine if they “*would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which such river was established.*” In reviewing the project proposals as shown in Table 6 as related to recreation, these projects will not have a direct and adverse effect to the recreation resource inside of the WSR corridor because;

- The available types and annual use for dispersed recreation activities will not be adversely affected in the short and long term. Dispersed uses may fluctuate each year but other factors like weather, choosing a different vacation destination, fuel prices, and success/non-success of obtaining a hunting tag also influences use in an area. Visitors will continue to find a forested natural appearing environment, and will find many locations across the project area for uncrowded settings
- The number, annual use and site capacity for developed recreation sites will not change in the short or the long term. All developed recreation sites will remain open, no individual campsites/grounds will be altered. As mentioned above, use varies depending on factors other than the level of project activities.
- The number of trail miles and use will not change in the short or long term. No prohibitions are being made to the number of trail miles or trails open and available for use.
- The number of permits and areas will not change in the short or long term. No changes in the terms of the permits or available locations are part of this project.
- It is anticipated that the overall quality of the recreation opportunities will vary but not be adverse to all users since they have an individual range of sense of place or human connection to any area.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

In reviewing the project proposals for all alternatives and evaluating them with the Forest Plan and River Plan Recreation Goal, Desired Future Conditions, Management Area Standards and Guidelines and ROS, they appear to be in full compliance. The alternatives will also meet all relevant laws, regulations, policies and plans.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

There are no irreversible and irretrievable commitments to the recreation resource associated with any of the alternatives analyzed. The number, available types and use capacity for developed, dispersed and trail recreation activities will not be changed by the project proposal.